

# Handling Dry Ice

Dry ice is solid carbon dioxide. It can cause injury if handled improperly. Handling dry ice safely requires following certain precautions:

- Dry ice is extremely cold (-110°F or -79°C). To avoid frostbite, do not touch dry ice with bare skin. Wear goggles, thick gloves, and suitable clothing (e.g., long sleeves) to minimize the risk of skin contact with dry ice.
- Dry ice should only be used in areas with adequate ventilation. Dry ice evaporates to form carbon dioxide gas. This gas can cause respiratory distress and death by suffocation. (See article at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5350a6.htm> for additional information.)  
Carbon dioxide gas is heavier than air and can accumulate at floor level or in confined spaces, increasing the risk of suffocation. Early signs include difficulty breathing, or panting. If you experience these signs, immediately move to an open area. Do not enter areas where carbon dioxide gas may have accumulated without first testing for the carbon dioxide and oxygen content. Transport dry ice only in insulated, closed containers to prevent exposure to carbon dioxide gas.
- Do not store dry ice in tight containers. Pressure develops as dry ice evaporates, which could burst air-tight containers.
- When handling dry ice, only use equipment designed for low temperatures.
- First aid: In case of frostbite, obtain medical treatment immediately. If carbon dioxide gas is inhaled, remove the exposed person to an area with fresh air. If breathing is difficult, give oxygen if available. Phone 911 for emergency medical assistance if breathing does not become easier. If the person is not breathing, give artificial respiration (e.g., mouth-to-mouth) and phone 911 for emergency medical assistance.
- Disposal: Dry ice can be disposed of by leaving the container open in a well-ventilated area. The dry ice will evaporate to form carbon dioxide gas. Make sure the container is not accessible to children to prevent frostbite.

**Handle  
dry ice  
safely!**



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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention